

RELEASED IN FULL

**DRL PRESS GUIDANCE****April 25, 2002****GRANT FOR VENEZUELA DEMOCRACY PROGRAMS**

**Q: Is a \$1 million State Department grant to the National Endowment for Democracy for activities in Venezuela on hold?**

**A:**

- **NO. THE STORY IS WRONG; WE INFORMED THE REPORTER LAST NIGHT.**
- **THE DEPARTMENT IS PREPARING A GRANT TO THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (NED) TO SUPPORT NON-PARTISAN DEMOCRACY-BUILDING INITIATIVES IN VENEZUELA.**
- **THE GRANT IS NOT ON HOLD.**
- **THE GRANT WILL BE MADE FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY FUND THAT IS ADMINISTERED BY THE BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR.**
- **THE BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR NOTIFIED CONGRESS OF THE PROPOSED GRANT IN MID-MARCH. THERE WAS NO OBJECTION. WE EXPECT TO SIGN IT SHORTLY.**

**Q: What about assertions that U.S. officials have been too close to those Venezuelans who were involved in the events of April 11-13?**

**A: U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE MET WITH A BROAD SPECTRUM OF VENEZUELANS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS BOTH IN CARACAS AND IN WASHINGTON. U.S. OFFICIALS MET WITH BUSINESS COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADERS, OPPOSITION POLITICAL LEADERS, PRO-CHAVEZ LEGISLATORS, AND A WIDE ARRAY OF VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. IN THE COURSE OF NORMAL DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS, U.S. OFFICIALS MET WITH PEDRO CARMONA, THE PRESIDENT OF THE VENEZUELAN FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE (FEDECAMARAS).**

**OUR MESSAGE TO ALL VENEZUELAN CONTACTS HAS BEEN CONSISTENT. THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN VENEZUELA IS ONE FOR VENEZUELANS TO RESOLVE PEACEFULLY, DEMOCRATICALLY AND CONSTITUTIONALLY. WE EXPLICITLY TOLD ALL OF OUR VENEZUELAN INTERLOCUTORS ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS AND AT MANY LEVELS THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD THE UNITED STATES SUPPORT ANY UNCONSTITUTIONAL, UNDEMOCRATIC EFFORT, SUCH AS A COUP.**